Villanova Journal of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

Vol. 2. No. 1. 2020. ISSN: 2672-5037 (Online) 2672-5029 (Print)

CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION: DRAWING THE LINES AND MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

Prof. KANU, Ikechukwu Anthony
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Tansian University, Umunya
Anambra State
ikee_mario@yahoo.com
&
OMOJOLA Immaculata Olu, (SSMA), PhD
Department of Business Administration and Management
Villanova Polytechnic
Imesi Ile
Osun State
omojolassma@yahoo.co.uk
&
Mike Boni Bazza, PhD
Department of History and International Relations
Veritas University Abuja (The Catholic University of Nigeria)
danbazza68@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper has argued that there is a relationship between climate change and migration. It was discovered that most times, climate change results in migration at both local, regional and internationally levels. It may result into temporal or permanent migration. While it is important for local communities to come together to work out modalities of solving climate change problems, there is need on the part of the government to systematically align climate and development policies, aiming at poverty reduction, food security as well as effective structures dealing with climate change. This will go a long way in the aspect of climate-migration relationship. This paper finally suggested that local communities need to come together to alleviate climate change problems; not constantly waiting for the regional and international levels all the time. In some cases, help from the government may not come very fast, while affected communities continue to suffer.

Key words: Climate change, Migration, Droughts, Flood, Environment, Hunger, Greener Pasture.

Introduction

Migration encompasses people, who are forced to leave their homes because of natural or human-made disasters. In some cases however, people move willingly in search of greener pasture. The decision to migrate or to stay is then furthermore dependent on personal and household characteristics as well as other contextual factors like cost of moving and existing networks. Migration in relation to climate change is as old as man

Vol. 2. No. 1. 2020. ISSN: 2672-5037 (Online) 2672-5029 (Print)

as Barrett (2012 opines. "Climate-related human migration has a long history, with droughts, floods, food shortages, and other climate-related changes forcing the resettlement of populations since early hominids first spread out from Africa nearly two million years ago. Climate vulnerability increases with people's inability to cope with extreme weather events, which can affect infrastructure and the availability of ecosystem services, creating socioeconomic and geopolitical pressures. These factors, in turn, can influence people's mobility. Waldinger and Fankhauser (2015) share this view as they opine that "Migration has been a frequent response to climate variability and change in the past."

Martin (2010) pays attention to forms of migration when he says that it can be planned or spontaneous, involving individuals and households or entire communities. It can be internal, with people moving shorter or longer distances to find new homes and livelihoods within their own countries, or it can be international, with people seeking to relocate to other countries. It can proceed as an orderly movement of people from one location to another, or it can occur under emergency circumstances. It can be temporary, with most migrants expecting to return home when conditions permit, or it can be permanent, with most migrants unable or unwilling to return.

Climate change has an impact on migration decisions for people, especially if their livelihoods are resource dependent. Robert (2015) contributes to this by saying that Climate change can force people to travel across international borders in unprecedented numbers. Therefore there can be "climate migrants," or "environmental refugees," or "climate refugees," which are totally different from economic migrants or political refugees.

Relationship between Climate Change and Migration

Climate change is related to migration in the sense that one leads to the other. It seems that migration is a solution to climate change because when the environment is becoming unconducive, movement must materialize. In a case where drought is affecting farmers, they migrate temporarily and over short distances within the country and many affected people will move with them. Supporting this assertion, Waldinger and Fankhauser (2015) affirm that the effect of climate change on migration depends crucially on socio-economic, political, and institutional conditions. These conditions affect both vulnerability to climate change and how important climate change is in determining migration decisions. People working in the agricultural sector are particularly affected by short-term climate shocks (droughts, flooding etc.) and long-term climate change.

In the mind of Martin (2010) however, "Climate change is associated with migration, conflict, and violence". He went further to explain this by saying that migration can have positive as well as negative consequences for the affected populations and the communities to which they migrate. The negative impacts stem particularly from

Vol. 2. No. 1. 2020. ISSN: 2672-5037 (Online) 2672-5029 (Print)

emergency mass movements, generally those related to the rapid-onset natural disasters and to competition for resources that may result in conflict. These movements most closely resemble refugee movements and often require large-scale humanitarian assistance. The negative impacts may also be more extreme if receiving communities, particularly urban areas, are unprepared to absorb large numbers of spontaneous migrants. The more positive impacts occur when migration is a voluntary coping strategy that allows people time to weigh alternatives and use migration as a way to reduce household risk. This is to lay emphasis on how far climate change can affect people's life.

In the mind of Waldinger and Fankhauser (2015) "The empirical evidence shows that people in developing countries are likely to respond to climatic change by migrating internally." Sharing this view, Robert (2015) asserts that there is growing recognition that the effects of climate change are likely to lead to more migration, both internally and internationally, in near future. These climate change-induced migrations are likely to pose new challenges to the international system, ranging from an increase in irregular migration, to strains on existing asylum systems, to protection gaps for certain migrants affected.

Referring to how climate change will affect developing countries, Kahn (2017) states that most vulnerable countries are those that are urbanizing but not rich enough to protect themselves through higher-quality infrastructure and housing. Rural areas are poor but spread out and thus diversified against spatial shocks. In contrast, poor cities are undiversified and can suffer greatly from natural disasters.

During climate change however, people do experience scarcity of food / water and of course increase in contagious deceases. To state how related climate change is to migration, Barrett (2012) maintains that even "migration often brings with it new challenges such as food shortages, lack of drinking water, and increased incidence and altered patterns of infectious disease." Although Herrera (2018) argued that apart from climate change, other factors are responsible for ecological changes. "Climate change will aggravate environmental degradation and toxic exposure from the wastewater sector, but the factors that contribute to wastewater contamination are not a result of climate change. Non-climate change factors such as aging infrastructure, industrialization and population growth will have similar levels of negative environmental impact in the short term even outside of climate change scenarios." This implies that other factors are responsible for environmental dilapidation especially in developing countries.

Although referring to the case of Asia in particular, Kahn (2017) stresses that climate change will increase the quantity and severity of heat waves in Asia. Those who work in nonair-conditioned buildings will face the greatest exposure from rising average

Vol. 2. No. 1. 2020. ISSN: 2672-5037 (Online) 2672-5029 (Print)

temperatures. Poor people face challenges that richer people working and shopping in newer office buildings and malls do not face. This must lead to migration.

Davidson (2008) comes up with a suggestion on how to reduce carbon footprint, such as using energy more efficiently and by recycling and composting household waste using local efforts. To him, renewable energy generation will lead to wider community benefits and investment, and improve the lives of residents. This may come in form of installing solar panels to provide hot water or developing water turbine to produce electricity which can be sold to public electricity supplier.

Cinner (2012) is of the opinion that societies must choose how they wish to deal with climate change. Not doing anything or pursuing "business as usual" is a choice that will likely lead to devastating consequences for many people, especially the world's poor. Therefore he is proposing that action must be at international, national, and local levels. In his words, "International action and coordination are needed both to mitigate climate change and to coordinate the funding and efforts required for adaptation at national and local levels. Regional collaborations will help to coordinate climate-related policies, research, and training. Likewise, addressing key transboundary issues at the regional scale may have important climate adaptation implications, such as fishers crossing international borders." This idea is related to what Davidson (2008) suggested earlier. By implication, local communities need to come together to allay climate change problems; not constantly waiting for the regional and international levels all the time. However, Cinner suggests building local-scale adaptive capacity in societies by strengthening the most appropriate and needed aspects of a society's assets, flexibility, learning, and social organizations. These can be achieved by using the existing local capacities and needs. This will improve the condition of the natural resources on which people depend for their livelihoods.

Conclusion

Relationship between climate change and migration has been established by this paper. It was discovered that most times, climate change results in migration at both local, regional and internationally levels. It may result into temporal or permanent migration. While it is important for local communities to come together to work out modalities of solving climate change problems, there is need on the part of the government to systematically align climate and development policies, aiming at poverty reduction, food security as well as effective structures dealing with climate change. This will go a long way in the aspect of climate-migration relationship.

References

Barrett J. R (2012). Migration Associated with Climate Change: Modern Face of an Ancient Phenomenon. Journal of Environmental Health Perspectives. Volume: 120. Issue: 5

Cinner J. E. (2012). Adapting to a Changing Environment: Confronting the Consequences of Climate Change. New York. Oxford University Press.

Davidson J. (2008). Communities Try out Responses to Climate Change; COUNTRY & FARMING Environment Matters. Western Mail (Cardiff, Wales) Newspaper. Page number: 7

Gregory W. (2011) Climate Change and Migration: Security and Borders in a Warming World. Oxford University Press. New York.

Herrera V (2018). Beyond Climate Change. ReVista (Cambridge). Volume: 18. Issue: 3.

Kahn M. E (2017). Will Climate Change Cause Enormous Social Costs for Poor Asian Cities? Journal of Asian Development Review. Volume: 34. Issue: 2.

Martin. S (2010). Climate Change, Migration, and Governance. Journal of Global Governance. Volume: 16. Issue: 3.

Robert J. B (2015) Ed. Society and Climate Change: Sociological Perspectives. Oxford University Press. New York.

Waldinger M. and Fankhauser S. (2015). Climate change and migration in developing countries: evidence and implications for PRISE countrie. Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy (CCCEP). A Journal of Climate Change and Displacement.